

Chapter 11 - Know First Aid to Prevent Panic and Save Lives

Suggested Activities

- **Show** the contents of company first-aid kits
- **Demonstrate** how to check if someone is breathing
- **Demonstrate** mouth-to-mouth resuscitation with a face shield
- **Demonstrate** what to do when a person is in shock
- **Describe** a medical situation to the workers; ask for volunteers to go over the steps they should take.
- **Invite** a company nurse, first aid person, or EMT to conduct the training

For additional information, refer to the **Background** text below.

Background

First-aid knowledge is valuable on and off the job. It starts with four essentials:

- Seconds can count in an emergency. Call immediately for medical assistance when there's an injury or illness.
- Bring help to the victim. Don't move the person unless absolutely necessary.
- Know where first-aid kits are kept.
- If you're not sure what to do, don't do anything—wait for medical assistance. The wrong treatment or movement can be dangerous.

There are, however, actions workers can take while waiting for medical assistance, to keep victims comfortable and prevent a serious incident from getting worse—even fatal.

Breathing

A person who stops breathing can die in four to six minutes, so there may not be time to wait for the pros. If there's no possibility of a back or neck injury, shake the victim and shout to find out if the person is conscious. If there's no response, check for breathing by looking at chest movement and putting an ear to the victim's mouth and nose.

If the victim is not breathing:

- Lay the person on his or her back and loosen clothes around the neck.
- Make sure nothing is blocking the mouth or throat, then tilt the victim's head slightly and hold mouth open with your thumb.
- Pinch the victim's nose and cover his mouth with yours.
- Blow into the lungs once every five seconds till the victim's chest rises and falls and breathing from the mouth is detected.

Bleeding

Heavy bleeding can be life-threatening, so while waiting for help:

- Place a cloth or hand over the wound and push to stop bleeding.
- For deep cuts, apply that direct pressure and elevate the wound.
- For severe cuts, use direct pressure and elevation and push on pressure points on the inside of the upper arm and the crease of the groin area.

A tourniquet is a last resort—use only if bleeding won't stop and the victim is dying.

Shock

Serious injury or illness can send a person into shock—which can be fatal. It's vital to get help and, while waiting:

- Have the person lie down and cover them with a blanket, overcoat, or whatever is available. Check regularly for breathing.
- Don't provide anything to drink.

Anaphylactic shock is a severe—potentially deadly—allergic reaction to certain foods or an insect bite or sting. Symptoms include hives, weakness, and a swollen throat that could cause choking.

This is a real emergency, requiring immediate professional help. The victim may also need artificial respiration.

Broken Bones

Moving someone with a neck or back injury could cause paralysis or even death. When bones are or may be broken, keep the victim calm and still until help arrives.

If a limb is amputated, place it in a plastic bag inside a bag of ice and rush it to the hospital with the victim.

Heart Attack

Heart attacks can strike at any age, so everyone should know the symptoms:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Anxiety
- Ashen skin
- Perspiration or vomiting
- Crushing pain in the chest, under the breastbone, or down the left arm.

Help a heart attack victim sit or lie down. Loosen tight clothing at the waist and neck and provide oxygen. Don't allow the victim to move around or take any stimulants. Ask if the person has heart medication and get it if requested.

Stroke

A stroke is always very serious, and requires fast medical attention. A stroke victim may be unconscious or breathing heavily. Common symptoms include an inability to speak and apparent weakness in the face or limbs on one side of the body.

This is another condition that requires medical aid. The victim should be covered with a light blanket. Don't provide any stimulants, food, or drink.

Choking

Knowing how to perform the Heimlich Maneuver can help save a choking victim's life. Ask the person: "Are you choking?" If he or she indicates yes, follow this procedure with someone who is choking and can't talk:

- Stand behind the victim, your arm around the person's waist.
- Place your fist, thumb-side in, against the victim's stomach just below the ribs. Grab your fist with your other hand.
- Pull in and up sharply repeatedly until the object is dislodged or help arrives.

If that doesn't work and the victim is unconscious, you can either:

- Use your index and middle fingers to grasp the object causing the choking and remove it from the throat.
- Place the person on his back and push in and up sharply on the abdomen below the rib cage until the object is dislodged.

Conclusion

This overview will help workers respond to a medical emergency, but it's no substitute for a first-aid or CPR class. Encourage your workers to get that training, which is often available through your local Red Cross. To help ensure fast response, post emergency phone numbers, including local hospitals and the people in your company with first aid and CPR training, at all phones.

Remember: prompt, calm, correct actions in an emergency may save a life. Get medical help immediately. Then check for breathing. And if you're not sure what to do next, wait for trained experts to come and take charge.

First-Aid Checklist

Follow these rules in an emergency, when seconds count:

- ☐ Get medical assistance immediately—know whom to call.
- ☐ Bring help to the victim; don't bring the victim to the help.
- ☐ Know where to find first-aid kits.
- ☐ If you don't know what to do, just wait for help to arrive.

Breathing

- ☐ Shout; shake the person (if no suspected back/neck injury) to determine consciousness.
- ☐ If no response, check for breathing (look at chest; listen at mouth and nose).
- ☐ Lay a victim who's not breathing on their back and loosen clothes around neck.
- ☐ Make sure person's mouth and throat aren't blocked.
- ☐ Tilt victim's head slightly; hold mouth open with your thumb.
- ☐ Pinch victim's nose and cover mouth with yours.
- ☐ Blow into lungs every five seconds until breathing is restored.

Bleeding

- ☐ Place cloth or hand over wound and push.
- ☐ Deeper cuts:
 - Apply direct pressure
 - Elevate the wound.
- ☐ Severe cuts:
 - Apply direct pressure
 - Elevate the wound
 - Push on pressure points on inside of upper arm and crease of groin area.
- ☐ Use tourniquet only if bleeding won't stop and victim is dying.

Shock

- ☐ Lay victim down and cover.
- ☐ Check regularly for breathing; don't offer beverages.
- ☐ Get emergency help for anaphylactic shock; administer artificial respiration if necessary.

Broken Bones

- ☐ Don't move victim.
- ☐ If limb is amputated, place it in a plastic bag inside another bag with ice and take to hospital with victim.

Heart Attack

- ☐ Know symptoms:
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Anxiety
 - Ashen skin
 - Perspiration or vomiting
 - Crushing pain in chest, under breastbone, down left arm.
- ☐ Help victim to comfortable sitting or lying position; don't let him or her move about.
- ☐ Loosen clothing at waist and neck.
- ☐ Give oxygen.
- ☐ Ask about heart medication; don't give any stimulants.

Stroke

- ☐ Recognize symptoms:
 - Unconsciousness
 - Heavy breathing
 - Inability to speak
 - Apparent weakness in face or limbs on one side of body.
- ☐ Cover with light blanket.
- ☐ Offer no stimulants, food, or drink while waiting for help.

Choking

- ☐ Stand behind victim, your arm around victim's waist.
- ☐ Place your fist, thumb-side in, against victim's stomach between navel and ribs and grab fist with your other hand.
- ☐ Keep pulling in and up sharply until object is dislodged.

Alternatives for unconscious victim:

- ☐ Grasp and remove object with your index and middle fingers, or
- ☐ Place person on back and push in and up sharply on abdomen below the rib cage until object is dislodged.